Execution of Justice Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

The play is the trial of Dan White, a former police officer on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, who resigned from his position. After he resigned, he believed that Harvey Milk, a gay public official , and George Moscone, the mayor, were working to destroy San Francisco by promoting diversity and gay rights. Also, White tried to requested to return to his position after resigning, and believed that Milk and Moscone colluded to prevent him from obtaining his old position again. Then, White killed Moscone and Milk. This is the trial the play deals with, the year is 1978.

2. What is the *intrusion*?

Though I had trouble distinguishing the intrusion in this play, I think it is the moment of the defense when “Twinkie Defense” is utilized. Up until this moment, it was obvious that the trial and jury were biased toward Dan White. However, once they but into junk food being the cause of Dan’s murders, it becomes totally clear that this is not an unbiased trial.

3. What is the *unique factor*?

The unique factor is the social and political opinions/positions of the three central characters. Dan White is a conservative, straight male who has the backing of other white conservatives. Milk is a liberal gay man who has the support of the left wing. This is not a simple murder case because of various elements such as religion, prejudices, political motives, and psychosis.

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will the court but into the defenses weak arguments and let Dan off with a light sentence even though there is irrefutable evidence that he murdered Milk and Mascone in cold blood? Was Dan White actually psychotic, or had I really murdered them in cold blood?

5. Provide an illustration of the *two kinds of exposition* that the play has in it.

All of the exposition of this play is provided in the form of dialogue during the trial and short interjections from other characters. The other characters pop up in the middle of the case to offer more information on the characters involved in the trial.

6. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

The most theatrical moment is at the very end of the play, when the gavel sounds and the words “Execution of Justice” flash on screen. Also the scene when Dan eats a twinkie and says, “Take this and eat, for this in my defense” is particularly disturbing. Both of these scenes show the unfairness of the court, and the sick lack of remorse Dan has for not only killing two innocent men, but also abusing the court system to get a lighter sentence.

7. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Abuse of mental disorder in court trials

Inequality in the court system because of race, gender, sexual orientation, political status, etc.

8. What do the principal characters *want* and what are some *obstacles* that stand in the way of them getting what they want?

Norman, the prosecuting attorney, along with all the friends and supporters of Moscone and Milk, want justice to be brought to Dan White. They stand for the truth: that Dan White murdered Moscone and Milk in cold blood out of hate after he resigned from his own position and wasn’t appointed. The obstacle they face is White using the “psychosis card” and the bias jury and judge.

White and his supporters want a lighter sentence, they face no obstacles and achieve this.

Schmidt is an interesting character because while he claims he wants justice for Dan, he at the same time causes Dan to get a lighter sentence than he deserves for the murders.

9. Describe some possible *images* in the play and how does the *title* help us understand the play.

The twinky defense is an image of the ridiculous biasness of the jury during the case. The title is ironic because justice is not served in this case and Dan White receives a lighter sentence than he deserves.

10. Briefly define the *family relationships* that are examined in the play.

Dan and his wife